

Mobility Aids Scams

Information for
Relatives and Agencies



Mobility Aids Scams

There is a steadily increasing market for accessible living and mobility aids, with developments in technology allowing more people to live comfortably and safely in their own homes for longer.

Fraudulent salespeople are directly targeting older consumers and pressuring them into spending large sums of money on products which are substandard or which do not meet their needs.

What is a mobility aid?

Some of the most common products which help people who have mobility issues or who need assistance with daily living are:

- mobility scooters
- heating pads for chairs and beds
- stairlifts
- orthopaedic chairs and beds
- hand rails

Who is affected by mobility aids scams?

Mobility aids scams primarily target older people, many of whom have recently used NHS services or who have previously purchased mobility aids.

How do mobility aids scams work?

Fraudulent salespeople usually begin by cold calling people. They might say that they are carrying out a medical survey or imply that they are affiliated with the NHS. They then offer to visit the consumer at their home. Once they are in the consumer's house, the salesperson can use pressure selling tactics to wear them down, often refusing to leave until the consumer has agreed to buy a product.

These salespeople can appear trustworthy - they might wear similar outfits to nurses or physiotherapists, claim to be endorsed by the NHS or even claim to be working for the NHS or an associated company.



What if the consumer changes their mind after the salesperson leaves?

Any consumer who purchased goods or services worth over £42 has the right to cancel the contract within 14 days, unless the product is bespoke.

Do most people just cancel their contracts?

Many consumers or their family members try to cancel their contracts, but are told that they can't because the product they have bought is bespoke. If a product is being custom made to the consumer's specifications, they no longer have the same cancellation rights.

However, in many cases, although companies tell consumers that they products they are purchasing are bespoke, the salesperson has not actually taken any measurements. Several consumers have been told that they will receive a custom-made product, but when it arrives it is clearly an 'off-the-shelf' size.

What happens next?

The businesses and individuals involved in these scams can prove very difficult to contact if there are any problems and many customers have to go through lengthy and stressful processes to try to get their money back.

A lot of the consumers affected by these scams can become increasingly anxious when trying to deal with fraudulent salespeople. They might not have been given much paperwork and it may not be clear how much they have paid and what they paid for.

I'm worried that a relative, friend or client may experience one of these scams. How can I help them?

The best way to prevent mobility aids scams is to make sure that as many people as possible are aware of them. Advise relatives or clients not to deal with cold callers who ask them to complete a health survey or offer a home visit from a mobility aids salesperson.

If they are becoming anxious about unsolicited phone calls from potential scammers, you might want to install a call blocking device, which will prevent the majority of nuisance calls from getting through (see below).

If you know that they have agreed to a home visit from a salesperson, you might want to be in the house with them during the appointment to provide a second opinion.



What can I do if someone I know has bought mobility aids that they don't need or want or that are of poor quality?

If you have any concerns, your first port of call should be **Advice Direct Scotland** via <https://consumeradvice.scot/> or on **0808 164 6000**. They will be able to advise you of the relevant consumer legislation and will let you know what to do next.

Where can I find trusted advice and support?

Living Made Easy is an impartial advice and information website about daily living equipment, and other aspects of independent living. The site has been developed by the Disability Living Foundation's team of occupational therapists and contains useful advice for anyone looking to buy products that might help them, as well as video clips of equipment in use. Find out more at <https://livingmadeeasy.org.uk/>

Age Scotland provide a range of free and impartial advice and services including guides on avoiding scams. Find out more at www.agescotland.org.uk or by calling their helpline on **08001244222**

The British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) is a consumer protection body, ensuring that each of their members of retailers, installers, service providers, distributors and manufacturers adhere to their code of practice (approved by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute). This sets out strict standards that members must meet to demonstrate best practice and ethical behaviour in their business dealings. Find and verify reputable, BHTA-approved healthcare and assistive technology companies at www.bhta.com/new-member-listing.

Advice Direct Scotland provide free, impartial advice and information about your consumer rights and can help if you experience a scam or any issues with products or services you have purchased. Find out more at <https://consumeradvice.scot/> or on **0808 164 6000**

Blocking Nuisance Calls

If you are worried about cold callers, you can sign a relative or client up to the **Telephone Preference Service** for free by calling **034 070 0707** or online at www.tpsonline.org.uk.

Many home phone providers offer services (some of which are free) to block unwanted calls. There is also a range of standalone devices that can be used to block/ monitor calls such as trueCall Secure call blockers: www.truecall.co.uk/shop/truecall-secure

www.tsscot.co.uk